

AUTHOR OF "THE OCCASIONAL OFFENDER," "THE WIRE TAPPERS," "GUN RUNNERS," ETC. NOVELIZED FROM THE PATHE PHOTO PLAY OF THE SAME NAME

stood a magazine ritle to which a Max-

im silencer had been adjusted. And

on the floor beside the rifle lay yet

another weapon. This, however, was

a weapon of defense, for it consisted

of a craftily constructed cape which,

for purposes of disguise, could be

promptly converted into a woman's

So sure was Mauki of his defensive

arrangements that when he caught

sight of Peggy O'Mara and her father

at the window he promptly reached

for his rifle, adjusted the barrel be-

tween the shutter slats, and took aim,

The next moment a bullet want

creating through the window of the

instinctively the two startled fig-

mres lesped away from the window.

third person had entered the room.

And a second glance showed them

that it was the Laughing Mask him-

He stood for a moment or two, star-

ing down at the spotted warning that

lay face upward on the floor. Then

he stared at the shattered window.

The next moment he was pushing

Peggy and Dan O'Mara bodily back

"But what's the meanin' of all this,

"It means that a bullet came through

that window," the Laughing Mask ex-

plained. "And I know that bullet was

The next moment the Laughing

Mask had caught a broom from the

corner and about it was draping one of

Peggy O'Mara's well-worn waists.

Above this he placed the girl's hat,

tying it in place with a scart. Then

dropping to his knees well out of sight

on one side of the window, he slowly

advanced his improvised dummy into

That rough outline of a human fig-

ure was scarcely in position at the

window before a second pane crashed

in and the broom was knocked from

the hand of the masked man hold-

"That shot could have come only

from one of those three houses across

the way. And it's ten to one it's from

He drew away from the window and

"O'Mara, I want you to slip out by

stood for a moment deep in thought.

your back door and get help. Call on

any neighbors you can trust in a case

like this. Then hurry back here, for

I don't want that scoundrel to suspect

his plans haven't worked out exactly

O'Mara as he slipped away. And while

waiting for his return the Laughing

With this he powdered her hands and

blanched her thin young face. Dan

O'Mara had stepped back into the

house before the masked visitor had

he's done his work. I don't want him

to break from cover until your friends

have surrounded that house. So take

your daughter and carry her out, just

Dan O'Mara, doing as he was di-

rected, stepped from the doorway with

his own white-faced daughter hanging

limp in his arms. He acted his part

with a sincerity that was not without

had staggered into the open with that

apparently sad burden, the sniper from

the shuttered house was detected slip-

ping out of a cellar window and scur-

Dan O'Mara's friends could completely

take up their position about the sus-

strange-looking cape, the alarm was

costing her as she hobbled across the

Five minutes later a swarthy-skinned

man with wiry black hair was hurry-

ing across country to one of the well-

news of his enemy's ruse and his own

Legar had evolved yet another plan

angrow escape.

That escape, however, came before

rying along a broken fence.

as though she were a dead girl."

Now, I want that sniper to think

Mask sent Peggy for a cuptul

"We'll get the divil!" announced

that empty house on the right!"

the square of light.

as he imagines!"

completed his task.

ing it.

intended for your daughter here."

from that square of light.

As they did so they realized that a

Then be pulled the trigger.

On Windward Island Pallioni in Mrs. Golden into an appearance of which causes Golden to capture and ture the Italian by branding his face crucking his hand. Palldori floods the land made kidnaps Golden's little daughter floods the land made kidnaps Golden's little daughter floods the land made kidnaps Golden's little daughter floods the land made for excuse Margery from Logar and takes her to her father's home whence she is recaptured. Margery mother fruitlessly implores Golden to find their daughter. The Laughing Mask again takes Margery away from Lagar Legar sends to Golden a varning and ademand for a portion of the chart of Windward Island. Margery meets her mother. The chart is lost in a fight between Manley and one of Legar's henchmen, but is recovered by the Laughins Mask Count De Esparce figures in a dublous attempt to series Legar and claims to have killed him Golden a how is dynamited during a masked ball. Legar escapes but Da Esparce is crushed in the ruine. Margery rescues the Laughing Mask from the police. Manley finds Margery not indifferent to his love. He naves her from Mauki's poisoned arrows. Manley plans a mock tuneral which fails to accomplish the desired purpose, the capture of the Iron Claw and his gang. Margery is saved from death at the hands of the Iron Claw by the Laughing Mask. On Windward Island Palliori in

TWELFTH EPISODE *

The Haunted Canvas.

The daughter of Dan O'Mara was a very happy girl. So happy, in fact, was the freckled-nosed Peggy that there were times when the sheer novelty of her good fortune somewhat frightened her. For the tide had turned. The O'Mara family, as Peggy put it, was at last in clover. That mysterious righter of wrongs known as the Laughing Mask had interested himself in getting honest work for Dan O'Mara. And that gracious-eyed lady known as Margery Golden, once she had realized the true position of the family, had become equally interested in doing what she could for the spindle-legged Peggy.

It is true, none the less, that this last-mentioned young lady's benefactress had been momentarily nonplused by Peggy's choice of a vocation, when this choice was placed before her.

"What would you like to do most?" Margery had asked at the end of her second trip to the O'Mara cottage, with a bundle of clothes for the all but breathless Peggy.

"Be a artist's model!" promptly announced the rapt-eyed factory girl. "But why a model?" asked the amazed Miss Golden.

"To doll up in glad rags and get mescif painted!" explained the dreamer of the dye vats. And odd as that choice seemed to her, Margery Golden did not depart from her promise. She sought out her artist friend, Frank Aimick, and inveigled him to experiment with a new and somewhat un-

Frank Aimick, however, soon found the ardent-eyed young Peggy more of a help to him than he had anticipated. Some of her unctuous yet uncouth attitudinizing, in fact, brought a smile to the face of the busy artist.

But that smile was never broader than when he noticed her standing wide-eyed before the large canvas shove the fireplace at the end of his studio. For this painting, which bore the title of "The Vigilante," was a remarkable piece of work, in more ways than one. It showed the life-size figure of a frontiersman staring out into the room, with a leveled carbine at his buckskinned shoulder. But the arresting feature of the painting lay in the fact that both the eyes of the figure and the barrel of the leveled rifle seemed always to be directed at the spectator, no matter what position the spectator might take.

"That guy gives me the willies!" Peggy protested as she made her way back to the model throne. "Why?" asked the smiling man at

the easel. "He keeps such a bead on you, no

matter where you get in this room!" was the girl's reply.

given, and the pursuit began. But destiny, in the form of one Jules Legar, had secretly ordained that Peggy's happiness should not be a lasting one. For Peggy O'Mara was no down the mysterious gunman so wanlonger a trivial factor in the activities had brought defeat to his plans when fleeing Mauki proved himself starting part of his upper arm a small steel success seemed well within his hand. And for these humiliations Legar de- on his pursuers to round a corner, needle, dodge into an empty coalshed, and cided that the girl should pay, and pay to the full

The modest home of the O'Maras however, had no inkling of this decision until Dan O'Mara himself, wan dering about his combined kitchen and living room in search of his pipe, was somewhat startled to see a square of paper planed to the faded door panel. Peggy herself, joining her father, was equally mystified by this slip of paper, for its surface showed nothing but a round blot or two of black ink on a square of white. Neither Dan O'Mara nor his daughter had any reason to know the meaning of the spotted warning, any more than they knew that one Mauki, the stealthy 'missary of the Iron Claw, stood hinder behind the walls of one of the three cottages commanding a clear view of the O'Mara home.

They had no way of knowing that this same Mauki lurked there behind a shuttered window, patiently watching. hour after hour, the house across the to completion one of his unfinished side the mantel end. way. Close beside him as he watched canvases for which the girl was act-

two of his followers, in the meantime, entered Aimick's studio on the pretense of being a fire varshal's inspector, caught the artist off his guard, and carried him bound and gagged and helpless to one of the small back rooms of the studio building.

Peggy herself, before starting out in answer to that summons, was still somewhat uneasy in mind over recent events. So she left word with her father to call for her not later than eleven o'clock.

But more than Dan O'Mara called for his daughter that night, for ten minutes after her departure from the cottage Margery Golden's limousine drew up at the door. Margery's eyes widened when O'Mara explained the reason of his daughter's absence from

"But an artist like Frank Aimick would never be able to work at night," she argued, with growing alarm. "He must have daylight for working in

color. Dan O'Mara turned to the table at his side.

"Here's his message, plain as day, written in his own handwritin'," was the puzzled workman's only explana-

Margery took the message in her hand and studied it. Then her color faded a little. "That is not Frank Aimick's writ-

ing!" she suddenly announced. "We must get to that studio as fast

as my car can carry us. Peggy O'Mara, in the meantime, was being confronted by more than one surprise. The first came with her arrival at the Aimick studio when the stranger who opened the door in response to her knock informed her that the artist was out, but would return in a minute or two. The second came with the quiet movement of yet another man who sidled up to the studio door and promptly locked stairs. and barred it. But the greatest suranyway?" demanded the astonished prise of all awaited her as she turned

"The painting—it is spiting as a costume model. Legar and throne. ting steel at us!"

Legar, however, was no longer in need of that warning. Standing to one side of the mantel, close beside the wall, he attacked the huge canvas with his fire-tongs, beating in the center of the picture at the same time that Peggy O'Mara, realizing that she was no longer being held a prisoner, caught up a teakwood tabouret and with it precipitated herself on the preoccupied Legar.

He ignored that flank attack, however, for the Iron Claw suddenly found himself confronted by a figure of more importance than either the spindle legged girl or a painted gunman.

Out from behind that tattered canvas had emerged a man wearing a yellow mask, tossing to one side a slender blowpipe as he came. Before he could regain his feet after that hurried leap from the mantel shelf, Legar himself had dropped the fire tongs and whipped a revolver from his pocket. This he leveled directly at the body of the Laughing Mask. But before he could pull the trigger, Peggy's tabouret struck against his outstretched arm, knocking the weapon

up in the air. By this time the Laughing Mask was up on his feet, and face to face with his enemy. Before the revolver could again be brought into play the two had clenched. Then the Iron Claw went down before a clean-cut blow from his opponent. He recovered himself sufficiently, however, to roll to where his fallen revolver lay. But before he could level that firearm at his adversary the Laughing Mask, remembering that even the officers of the law were no longer his friends, dived out through the small door at the rear of the studio and disappeared from sight, for already the sound of O'Mara and his rescuing party could be heard as they swarmed up the

The Iron Claw himself heard those sounds, draw himself together, and

"It Means That a Bullet Came Through That Window!"

standing before her.

She stood there, white lipped, staring from one evil face to the other as Legar's companions closed in about

"You're a fine bunch o' cradle snatchers!" she finally and wrathfully burst out at them, with the ultimate and reckless anger of desperation in her eyes. "You're a grand army o heroes, you are, to come five strong conviction. For, two minutes after he agin' a girl like me!"

"Stop that brat!" commanded the irate Legar. And there was a general movement in the direction of the blaz-

There was one man in that group, however, who did not join in that movement. The reason for this lay in the fact that at that moment he pected house. But one of those friends happened to be looking up at the paintcaught sight of the fugitive in the ing of "The Vigilante."

He was about to reach for a heavy easel-peg, to fling at the canvas, when It was not a long chase, but it was he suddenly straightened up, clapped a stern one. Determined as those in- a hand to his shoulder, and turned dignant factory-toilers were to run about. There was a look of mingled wonder and incredulity on his face. tonly threatening their homes, the Then he slowly drew from the fleshy ly fleet of foot. He gained sufficiently dart, little bigger than a knitting-

The next moment a second man, emerge a moment later as a stooped moving across the room to catch up a old woman in amber-colored spectacles curtain cord with which to tie the and a rusty gray wig. Being obviously captured girl, felt a sudden sting in hard of hearing, this same old woman his hip, stopped abruptly and pointcould not give much information to ed with a shout of anger toward the

the group of excited men suddenly ac- canvas above the mantel. Still another of Legar's followers, not realizing the meaning of that cry, stepped forward and stared at the painting. Out of the barrel-end of the painted rifle, as he did so, shot still

he duly reported to the Iron Claw the neck. "Th' darts!" he mumbled, as thickly as a drunken man might. "Th' Before the second day had passed darts 're drugged!"

But even before those numbied for the subjugation of his enemies, words were spoken the swarthy-This took the form of a deccy mes- skinned Mauki, trying to hold the still sage delivered to the unsuspecting struggling Peggy O'Mara down on a hasty request from Frank Aimick to shoulderblade, turned about, and saw come to his studio at nine o'clock that Legar run across the room and catch ly roadside as empty as a desert trail. night, to the end that he might herry up the heavy brass fire tongs from be-

"The painting!" squeaked Mauki

from the door and saw Legar himself! " helpissely about the dismanthat studio. Then the instinct of selfpreservation reasserted itself. Heran to the back of the room, dived into a kitchenette, found a small door in its wall, swung it open, discovered a dumb-waiter shaft in front of him, and escaped to the street. . . .

The Corridors of Dread.

Margery Golden, as she sat in the taxicab which carried her homeward, was comforted by the thought that she had at least saved the life of a factory girl to whom she stood indebted for her own escape from death. The further thought that she had sent Dan O'Mara and his exhausted daughter safely home in her own luxurious limousine even reconciled her to the somewhat stuffy-aired public convey ance in which she found herself. She blicked meditatively out at the back of the heavy faced driver so sullenly and yet so advoitly piloting her through the tangle of traffic. Then the abstraction suddenly went from her eyes and the Estlessness from her pose. For, from the back window of the red-wheeled taxicab immediately in front of her she caught sight of a pecring face. And it took no second glance to tell her that it was the deep-seared face of the Iron Claw himself.

The next moment Margory was shouting to her sullen-faced driver. "Follow that red-wheeled taxt," she told him, pointing down the side street. "Keep within sight of it, what-

ever happens!" Soon they had left the city well behind them and were in that twilight zone which is neither quite rural nor quite urban. But Margery, the moconcealed dens of Jules Legar, where another dart which buried itself in his ment she saw the red-wheeled taxicab come to a stop, commanded her driver to draw it under the shadow of a dense row of catalpa trees. There, from the running board of her car, she beheld Legar step out on the road, pay his chauffour, and stand looking after the departing faxicab until it disappeared from sight. * Then he turned Pezgy O'Mara, purporting to be a divan, felt a sharp pain above his about, pushed his way in through a tangle of shrubbery, and left the lone-

> man turned to her chauffeur. "I'm going to follow that man. If I staggering out against the model fail to return here inside of ten min-

Then the resolute browed young wo-

CONTINUOUS FROM 1 TO 10

TOMORROW

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Then He Pulled the Tripger.

utes, I want you to get any help you can, and come after me.'

margery stole along the shadowy roadside to the spot where she had seen Legar creep in through the bushes. She followed as best she could, found herself face to face with a tunnel-opening that showed itself dimly in the moonlight, and after a moment's hesitation stooped low and crept into this tunnel, feeling her way cautiously along the smooth brickwork of its walls. She came to a turn, buttressed with heavier masonry, and padded along this wall until her groping fingers came in contact with a light switch. This, after a moment's thought, she turned on. The next moment a number of bulbs along the corrider roof above her flowered into

light. Staring ahead of her, she saw that the corridor ended in nothing but a brank wall. But as she stared intently at the wall she detected in one side of it a partially concealed electric button. She moved toward this cautiously, for she had learned of old to be wary of approach to any of Legar's fastnesses. Then, as she advanced, she came to a sudden stop. For she saw on the flagstone upon which she was about to step a small cross. There was also a minute crevice, unnoticeable in its companions, about this quadrangle so suspiciously marked by its cross. So she stepped carefully over the suspected area, crept forward to the button, and touched it with a tentative fingertip.

The next moment a remarkable thing happened. A section of the heavy masonry shutting off the end of the corridor, at that touch, swung silently about on its axis, leaving an aperture wide enough for a human body to pass through. The girl, holding her breath, stepped through the ponderous masonry.

This chamber, she saw, was empty, except for two mysterious strands of fron chain that ran from ceiling to floor, close against the wall, while against the other stood a deal table and a camp couch across which lay a couple of very dirty blankets. But along the floor at the far end of the room her quick eye detected a thin pencil of light. So she tiptoed quietly forward until she stood close to the door above this illuminated crevice. Then she stooped lower, listening intently, for the sound of muffled voices

came to her from the room withfu. "I tell you we can't afford to fail in this move," she heard the voice of Legar himself announce, "The thing's got to be settled, and acttled before

morning!" "But how?" asked one of his fol-

lowers. "With two pounds of guncotton and a time fuse," was Legar's reply. "In the O'Mara cottage?" asked an-

"Yes; I want that cottage wiped of the face of the earth, and the family with it! And I want it done before

morning!" Margery listened, oblivious of the passing of time, as the conspirators behind the closed door continued U debate on their plan of action. The she started, even as much as they dis when the sudden buzzing of an eletric annunciator warned that inter

group of an intruder's approach. it was then and only then that the girl remembered her parting message to the texical diwer. All that was left her to do was to dart over to the camp cot, and drop down on the stone floor beside it.

The next moment Legar and his men were in the outer chamber. While one of the men crept to a secret outlook crevice in the farther wall Legar himself stepped to one of the coutrol chains which ran from floor to ceiling on the other side of the room, and by pulling one of these started into action some mysterious mechanism which the watching girl could not quite comprehend. She saw them run back to the inner room and stand waiting while Legar manipulated still another secret spring which threw open a hidden door in the back wall of that room. And that door, she surmised, led by some unknown passage to the outer world.

But Margery did not give much thought to this, for there came to her as she regained her feet the repeated ery of a human being, a ery husky with terror. She ran to the pivot door in the masonry, swung it back, and there beheld a sight which made her blood run cold. It took her, in fact, a ponderable space of time to understand the scene confronting her. But as she stared out she saw where her unsuspecting chauffeur had stoppen on the cross-marked Dagstone, tor h

and the second

was now several inches lower than the rest of the floor. And this, .obviously, had released a steel arm which had swung suddenly forward and swept the startled intruder flat against the stone wall, holding him there as in a vise. And as he stood pinioned there a great block of granite, released by some hidden machinery, was slowly descending from the roof of the corridor. Margery quickly manipulated the chains and released the chauffeur.

"Let me at 'em!" he shouted, brandishing the automobile wrench which he still carried in his hand. "Just let me at 'em!"

"It's no use," cried Margery, holding him back. "They have gone, the lot of them. And we've got to follow quickly, or there'll be a whole fammeet a worse fate than yours might have been tonight!"

She had taken the wrench from his hand and was leading him out of the tunnel mouth by this time, explaining that he would have to bring his taxicab from its hiding place and at once start in pursuit of the Iron Claw. But these explanations came to a sudden and an unexpected ending, for Legar and his followers, skulking in the bushes, caught that betraying sound of voices and saw a chance that was too good to be missed. They closed in on the girl and the taxi-driver. Yet that sullen-spirited driver, when cornered, fought with an energy so explosive that the entire circle became involved in the struggle. It was Legar himself, and only Legar, who had the presence of mind to direct the attention towards the girl. He swung suddenly about and started for her. She saw him coming, raised the heavy wrench she still carried and sent it flat against his bony temple and took to her heels. She jumped into the empty taxicab and headed for the O'Mara cottage.

So colorless was her face as the bewildered Dan O'Mara opened the door that he started back in alarm. And her words were even more disturb-

"Come away!" she called out. "Come quick, or it will be too late! "And what's wrong now?" asked the astounded householder.

"Get Peggy!" gasned the girl as she stared frantically about the little room. "Get her away from here, quick! The house has been mined! There's been a bomb left here, and any moment-"

She stopped speaking, for the pungent smell of powder smoke had assailed her nostrils. Then from the open window, in which a somewhat neglected flower-box stood, came a faint sputter of sound.

She ran to the window. Lying in the flower-box she saw a heavy cylinder of metal. Even before she caught sight of the time-fuse which quietly hissed and burned at one end of the cylinder, she knew what it was, It was the infernal machine which Legar's agent had placed there to destroy the house. And at any moment the explosion might take place.

Margery caught the heavy cylinder up in her hands. She even tried to blow out the fuse. But this was useless. Then she tried to tear it away. But this second effort was equally fruitless. And sheer panic took possession of her at the thought of her helplesness. The bomb dropped from her fingers to the floor. She made one instinctive effort to warn poor young Peggy O'Mara away, as the girl ran to her side. But instead of repeating that warning she let her arms close about the slender body as though in mute acknowledgment that she knew it was already too late. For the fuse, she could see, was burning down into the end of the cylinder itself. She even closed her eyes, awaiting the inevitable.

She couned them again, at the sound of a sudden step. She opened them to see a masked figure dart into the room, catch up the smoking metal cylinder, and with one and the same movement hurl it out through the open window.

The next moment a great detona tion shook the walls of that house. The bomb had exploded. But the house of O'Mara still stood. And Peggy and her father stared openmouthed at the newcomer, who, in-

stead of staring back at them, stood intently regarding Margory Golden. "The Laughing Mask!" said that omewhat shaken young lady, in little more than a whisper.

"At your service!" replied the man in the yellow mask, with a half-humeie and half-mocking bow as he stood, for one fleeting moment, in the narrow goorway,

(TO BE CONTINUED.)